



David B. Cohen

CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Department of Planning and Development

Michael J. Kruse, Director

Telephone
(617)-796-1120

TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089

Telefax
(617) 796-1142

E-mail

mkruse@ci.newton.ma.us

Public Hearing Date: October 10, 2006
Land Use Action Date: December 5, 2006
Board of Aldermen Action Date: December 18, 2006
90-Day Expiration Date: January 8, 2007

TO: Board of Aldermen

FROM: Michael Kruse, Director of Planning and Development
Nancy Radzevich, Chief Planner
Alexandra Ananth, Planner

DATE: October 6, 2006

SUBJECT: Petition #149-03(3) 300 NEEDHAM STREET LLC petition for a SPECIAL PERMIT/SITE PLAN APPROVAL (amending special permit #149-03) to install two freestanding signs and two oversize secondary wall signs at 300 NEEDHAM STREET, Ward 8, on land known as Sec 83, Blk 30, Lot 11, containing approximately 205,211 sq. ft. of land located in a district zoned MIXED USE 1.

CC: Mayor David B. Cohen

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Board of Aldermen and the public with technical information and planning analysis which may be useful in the special permit decision making process of the Board of Aldermen. The Planning Department's intention is to provide a balanced view of the issues with the information it has at the time of the public hearing. There may be other information that will be presented at or after the public hearing that the Land Use Committee will consider in its discussion at a subsequent Working Session.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

300 Needham Street LLC (the petitioner), is requesting an amendment to a special permit (BO #149-03) to install two freestanding signs on-site, one facing Needham Street and one facing Christina Street, and for two oversize wall mounted secondary signs on the south facade, facing Christina Street.

I. BACKGROUND

300 Needham Street is a site located on the corner of Needham and Christina Streets. The site is currently in a Mixed Use 1 District and subject to a special permit, which allowed the petitioner to convert and expand the existing structure for a self-storage facility with retail uses. The petitioner is in the process of completing work covered through BO #149-03. While the prime tenant, EZ Storage will occupy the majority of the building, retail space will be located on the first floor facing Needham and Christina Streets. The petitioner has stated that they have not leased any of the retail space as of yet and do not know who and how many tenants will occupy the retail area.

While signs were included in the original petition, the sign component of that petition was withdrawn without prejudice. As a result, the applicant now is seeking approval for two freestanding signs and two oversize secondary wall signs through an amendment to that special permit.

II. ELEMENTS OF THE PETITION

The petitioner is seeking an amendment to their special permit for the following:

- Sign 1. "EZ Storage" non-illuminated sign, –105 sq. ft., mounted over second story of central portion of south façade facing Christina Street (*requires special permit for size and to have two secondary signs on the same façade*);
- Sign 2. "EZ Storage" non-illuminated sign, –71 sq. ft., mounted over main pedestrian entrance on south façade facing Christina Street (*requires special permit for size and to have two secondary signs on the same façade*);
- Sign 3. "The Shops at 300 Needham" non-illuminated freestanding sign, total area 39.6 sq. ft., facing Needham Street (*requires special permit for freestanding sign*);
- Sign 4. "EZ Storage" non-illuminated freestanding sign, total area 39.6 sq. ft., facing Christina Street (*requires special permit for freestanding sign*);

The petitioner is proposing to locate two freestanding signs on site (Sign 3 & Sign 4), one along Needham Street, and one along Christina Street. Except for the actual sign panel both freestanding signs will be identical to each other and have a total area of 39.6 sq. ft. The sign panels will be metal and set in a brick and metal frame to match the building (*See attached detail sheets, ATTACHMENT "A"*). Both signs will be set in an approximately 12 ft. by 13'-4" ft. concrete planter box to match the existing building.

The two oversize secondary wall signs (Sign 1 & 2) will also be identical, except for size. Both signs will be located along the south façade of the building facing Christina Street. Sign 1 would be located in the center of the Christina Street façade, over the second floor. This sign would be –105 sq. ft. Sign 2 would be located over the pedestrian entrance and would be –71 sq. ft. Both signs will be "EZ Storage" logo signs.

The petitioner appeared before the City's Urban Design and Beautification Commission (UDBC) to seek support for their proposed signs earlier this summer. The UDBC recommended that the petitioner develop an overall sign program for the site and building defining the hierarchy of freestanding and building wall signs. The Commission indicated that the petitioner would need to seek approval from the Board of Aldermen for the EZ Storage freestanding sign. The Commission had no objection to the two wall signs, up to 100-sq. ft. in area per sign.

Since presenting their signs to the Commission the petitioner has made minor changes in the design of the sign panel on one of the freestanding signs, and changed the size of the wall mounted signs (increased one slightly and reduced the size of the other). Because the petitioner has made only minor changes to the proposed signs and followed the general advice of the Commission the petitioner is not expecting to appear before that Commission again.

Though the petitioner had submitted a write up on their proposed sign program, the Planning Department is concerned that the petitioner has not fully thought through future signage for additional tenants. The Planning Department believes the petitioner should consider setting strict limitations on the number and size of any potential wall mounted signs requested by future retail tenants, potentially, matching the size of Sign 2 (-71 sq. ft.) for consistency and in order to prevent a cluttered facade. As the petitioner is only seeking signage for EZ storage, any retail tenants seeking wall mounted signage greater than 50 sq. ft. will require a special permit petition separate of this petition.

III. ZONING RELIEF BEING SOUGHT

Based on the Chief Zoning Code Official's written determination (SEE ATTACHMENT "B"), the petitioner is seeking relief from or approvals through the following sections of the Zoning Ordinance:

-]= Section 30-200(9) and Section 30-20(1) for approval of two freestanding signs, one located on the Needham Street side of the property and one located on the Christina Street side of the property.*
- Section 30-200(2) and Section 30-20(0 for approval of two oversize "EZ Storage" secondary wall signs having area of -105 sq. ft. & -71 sq. ft. respectively, both located on the south elevation facing Christina Street.*
- Section 30-23 for Site Plan Approval pertaining to sign locations and approval of elevation plans pertaining to sign placement and design.*
- Section 30-24(d) for Special Permit Approval.*
- Amendment to BO #149-03 for the proposed signs, listed above.*

IV. SIGNIFICANT ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

In reviewing this petition, the Board of Aldermen should consider the following:

- Whether the nature of the use of the premises, the architecture of the building or its location with reference to the street is such that two freestanding signs will serve the public convenience and welfare;*
-]= Whether the nature of the use of the premises, the architecture of the building or its location with reference to the street is such that two oversized secondary wall signs on the south facade will serve the public convenience and welfare; and*
- Whether the location, size, or number of freestanding and secondary signs would have any adverse impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.*

V. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE AND NEIGHBORHOOD

A. Site

The 205,076 sq. ft. site is located at 300 Needham Street at the corner of Needham and Christina Streets in Newton Upper Falls. The site has recently been redeveloped into a self-storage facility with retail space fronting both Needham and Christina Streets, for which the petitioner received a special permit (#149-03). Construction has been completed and EZ Storage has begun operations, however, none of the retail space has yet been leased.

B. Neighborhood

The property is located at the edge of Newton Upper Falls, one block north of the Charles River and the Town of Needham boundary. The site is abutted on the north and across Christina Street, to the south, by commercial uses and abutted to the east by industrial uses. Nearly all of Needham Street is located within a large Mixed Use 1 District. Beyond the industrial use to the east is a medium-sized Single Residence 3 District improved with single-family dwellings. Directly across Needham Street from the subject property are both commercial and industrial uses. At the corner of Oak Street and Needham Street, on the opposite side of the intersection, is a small multifamily residential development, located in a Business 2 District.

VI. ANALYSIS

A. Technical Considerations, Sec.30-20(1)

The following table compares the proposed signs with the requirements of the Sign Ordinance:

	Maximum size	Proposed
Sign 1	50 sq. ft.	105 sq. ft. (EZ Storage)
Sign 2	50 sq. ft.	71 sq. ft. (EZ Storage)
Sign 3	NA for freestanding signs	39.6 sq. ft. (Shops at 300 Needham)
Sign 4	NA for freestanding signs	39.6 sq. ft. (EZ Storage)

As previously noted the petitioner is seeking an amendment to a special permit for two oversize secondary wall signs and for two freestanding signs. Proposed wall signs are approximately 24'-11" by 5'-9". Proposed freestanding signs are approximately 9'-4" by 5'-2". According to submitted plans none of the proposed signs will be illuminated.

B. Relevant Site Plan Approval Criteria, Sec.30-23

1. Convenience and safety of vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site

All patterns of vehicular and pedestrian movement previously approved under Special Permit #149-03 are expected to remain unchanged and the entrances and exits to the building are also unchanged. The City Traffic Engineer conducted a site visit and found no potential sight line problems with the proposed sign locations.

The Planning Department notes that prior to the public hearing the petitioner should specify the species and size of proposed landscaping at the base of the requested freestanding signs. The size should be such that the plantings do not interfere with sight lines.

2. Consideration of Site Design

The proposed signs appear to fit with the design elements of the building including scale. Given the location of the site on a corner lot with pedestrian and vehicular entrances from both Needham and Christina Streets, the petitioner's request for two freestanding signs appears to be appropriate. The petitioner has met with the UDBC and revised their signs accordingly.

C. Relevant Special Permit Criteria, Sec.30-24

1. The specific site is an appropriate location for such use/structure.

The proposed signage will provide visibility for both the shops at 300 Needham Street and EZ Storage along one of the busiest commercial streets in Newton. The freestanding signs proposed for the site are fairly understated and are consistent in scale with other freestanding signs along Needham Street. The proposed secondary signs will help direct people to the pedestrian entrances of the building along the Christina Street facade.

2. The use as developed and operated will not adversely affect the neighborhood.

All of the proposed signs face Needham or Christina Streets. At present there are no residential units facing these portions of these streets. All of the signs will comply with the illumination requirements of Section 30-20(I)(1)-(3) and as such should have no adverse impacts on the immediate neighborhood.

VII. SUMMARY

300 Needham Street is subject to Board Order #149-03, which governed the overall redevelopment of the site. While signs were included in the initial petition, the sign component was withdrawn without prejudice. As a result, signs were not included in the original special permit and the petitioner is currently requesting a special permit to install two freestanding signs on-site, one facing Needham Street and one facing Christina Street, and two oversize wall mounted secondary signs on the south façade facing Christina Street. Except for the actual sign panel both freestanding signs will be identical to each other and have a total area of 39.6 sq. ft. The two oversize secondary wall signs will also be identical "EZ Storage" logo signs, except for size. Both signs will be located along the south façade of the building facing Christina Street. One sign will be centered over the second floor of the building and be approximately 105 sq. ft, and

the other sign will be centered over the pedestrian entrance and be approximately 71 sq. ft. According to submitted plans none of the proposed signs will be illuminated.

According to submitted plans both freestanding signs are set back 7' from the lot line and as such should not interfere with the sight lines for vehicles exiting the site. *The Planning Department notes that prior to the public hearing the petitioner should specify, the species and size of proposed landscaping at the base of the requested freestanding signs.*

Though the petitioner had submitted a write up on their proposed sign program, the Planning Department is concerned that the petitioner has not fully thought through future signage for additional tenants. The Planning Department believes the petitioner should consider setting strict limitations on the number and size of any potential wall mounted signs requested by future retail tenants, potentially, matching the size of Sign 2 (-71 sq. ft.) for consistency and in order to prevent a cluttered façade. As the petitioner is only seeking signage for EZ storage, any retail tenants seeking wall mounted signage greater than 50 sq. ft. will need to request a special permit separate of this petition.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A : Zoning Review Memorandum, dated August 7, 2006

ATTACHMENT B : Detail Sheets of proposed freestanding and wall mounted signs,
Revised 8/30/06

Zoning Review Memorandum

Dt: August 7, 2006

To: Louis Dorso, representing EZ Storage

Fr: Juris Alksnitis, Chief Zoning Code Official

Cc: Michael Kruse, Director of Planning and Development
John Lojek, Commissioner of Inspectional Services

Re: Request for special permit for two freestanding signs and exception to install two oversize secondary wall signs.

Applicant: EZ Storage		300 Needham
Site: 300 Needham St	SBL: Section 83, Block 30, Lot 11	
Zoning: MU-1	Lot Area: 205,211 sq. ft.	
Prior use: Manufacturing	Prop. use: Retail & self-storage	

Background:

This Mixed Use zoned site contained a chemical manufacturing establishment, which has been demolished and removed. In its place, the applicant is completing a new commercial building to contain retail and self-storage uses. While the prime tenant, EZ Storage will occupy the majority of the building, retail space will be located on the first floor facing Needham St. and Christina St. The site is subject to Board Order #149-03, governing the overall development. While signs were included in the initial petition, the sign component was subsequently withdrawn without prejudice per BO#149-03(2). As a result, signs were not included in the original special permit and the applicant now seeks approval for two freestanding signs and two oversize secondary wall signs. The proposed freestanding signs along with the oversize secondary wall signs require an exception pursuant to Section 30-20(1) and special permit from the Board of Aldermen. The applicant consulted with the Urban Design and Beautification Commission on June 21, 2006, and Commission comments are summarized below.

Summary of Urban Design and Beautification Commission Comments

The Commission recommended that the applicant approach the signage needs of this locus by developing an overall sign program for the site and building, defining the hierarchy of free standing and building wall signs and establishing applicable guidelines for future tenants. Such a program would serve to enhance exterior signage, help distinguish the site and its business establishments while simplifying future sign replacement and review.

The Commission questioned the rationale for locating two freestanding signs on the same property, and suggested the applicant further explain the need for this configuration utilizing photo views of the applicable streetscapes and vehicular

approaches. In addition, the Commission noted that the location of the Needham St. side free standing sign appeared not well coordinated with the parking entry and circulation pattern. In other respects, the freestanding signs were considered well designed.

The Commission generally agreed with the proposed first floor level sign bands on the Needham St. and Christina St. elevations, respectively, but noted that whenever a free standing sign is approved, the building wall signs become subject to secondary sign requirements as stated in Section 30-20(f)(1) and (2).

Should the Board of Aldermen approve the EZ Storage free standing sign, the Commission has no objection to increasing the area of the proposed Christina St. wall sign indicating the pedestrian entry to EZ Storage up to not more than 100 sq. ft. The Commission noted that the proposed "eyebrow" sign located above the roofline was prohibited per Section 30-20(d)(2).

Administrative determinations

1. Board Order #149-03 granted a special permit for the subject uses together with site plan approval and multiple zoning reliefs. Plans referenced in Condition #1 govern the development of the site. While signs were included in the initial petition, the sign component was subsequently withdrawn without prejudice per BO#149-03(2). As a result, plans approved pursuant to BO#149-03 indicate potential locations for two free standing signs, but the plans do not show any specific signs, nor does BO #149-03 reference any Board action approving either free standing signs or granting any sign exceptions. The two currently proposed freestanding signs necessitate amendment of the above-referenced Board Order and relevant plans.
2. *Sections 30-20(0)(9) and 30-20(1) Exceptions*, provide that a special permit is required for standing signs and establish dimensional parameters. The proposed two freestanding signs appear to meet the applicable area and linear dimensional controls. One free standing sign on the Needham St. side will carry the logo "Shops at 300 Needham St." and the other free standing sign on the Christina St. side will carry the logo "EZ Storage". However, as noted by the Urban Design and Beautification Commission, it is unclear whether site conditions warrant two freestanding signs on the same property and whether it is in the public interest to allow both signs.
3. As the proposed freestanding signs constitute principal signs per Section 30-20(f)(1), all building mounted signs are secondary signs subject to Section 30-20(f)(2). Any secondary sign exceeding 50 sq. ft. requires approval by the Board of Aldermen pursuant to Section 30-20(l), *Exceptions*. In this case, the proposed 99.5 sq. ft. EZ Storage sign over the proposed entry facing Christina St. exceeds the 50 sq. ft. maximum area and requires approval by the Board of Aldermen. While this appears to be the main pedestrian entry, the applicant seeks approval for yet another wall sign of similar size. Initially placed above roof level within the "eyebrow" architectural feature, the applicant states that the sign has been lowered to be located just below roof level. However, no revised plans for this sign have been received. Altogether, the applicant seeks two secondary signs similar in scale to primary wall signs in addition to the freestanding sign, all three bearing solely the EZ Storage logo. As Section 30-20(f)(2) allows one secondary sign, the extra secondary sign to be

mounted near the roof level necessitates additional relief pursuant to Section 30-20(1).

4. The proposed new signs meet the illumination requirements of Section 30-20(i)(1)-(3). It is also noted that signs need to comply with Section 30-20(i)(4) which states that signs may not be illuminated during the hours of 11:00 pm to 7:00 am, unless an exception is petitioned and obtained from the Board of Aldermen pursuant to Section 30-20(1) and 30-24(d), special permit.
5. The applicant anticipates installing multiple secondary tenant signs on the Needham St. and Christina St. elevations of the subject building. Each future sign may have a maximum area of 50 sq. ft. per Section 30-20(f)(2). These future signs may be processed consistent with standard sign permitting procedures and do not require a special permit. However, it is suggested these signs be further defined and incorporated into a sign program for this building and site as recommended by the Urban Design and Beautification Commission. In the event any of the secondary signs exceeds 50 sq. ft., an exception will be necessary from the Board of Aldermen pursuant to Section 30-20(I) and Section 30-24(d), special permit.
6. Zoning review provided hereby is limited to aspects pertaining to the Sign Ordinance only. See "Zoning Relief Summary" below.

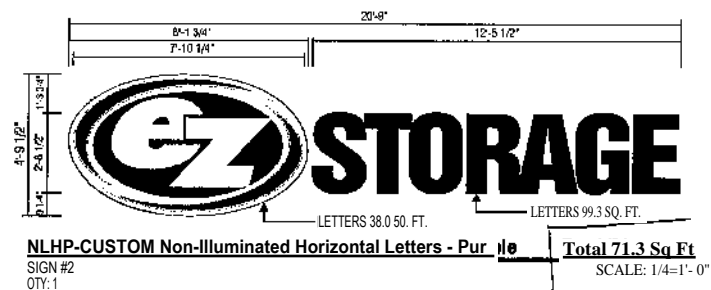
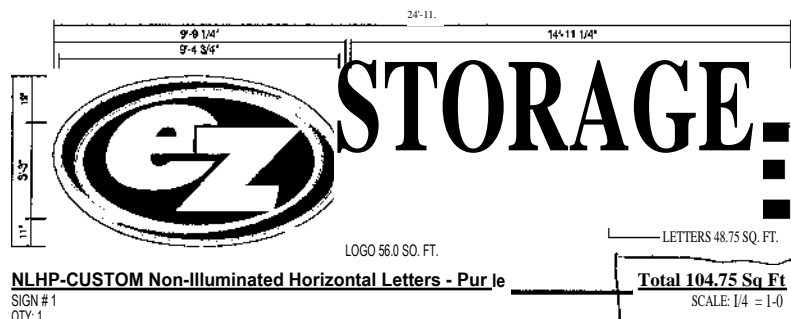
Zoning Relief Summary		
Ordinance		Action Required
	< Free Standing Signs	
30-20(f)(9) 30-20(1)	Approval of freestanding sign bearing logo "Shops at 300 Needham St." located on Needham St. side.	X
30-20(f)(9) 30-20(I)	Approval of free standing sign bearing logo " EZ Storage" located on Christina St. side.	X
	Wall Signs	
30-20(f)(2) 30-20(1)	Approval of one secondary wall sign bearing " EZ Storage" logo located over pedestrian entry facing Christina St., to exceed 50 sq. ft. area limit and having area of 99.5 sq. ft.	X
30-20(f)(2) 30-20(1)	Approval to place one extra secondary wall sign bearing "EZ Storage" logo on the Christina St. elevation, to be mounted high on wall below roof plate line within a sign band yet to be determined.	X
30-20(f)(2) 30-20(1)	Approval for extra (2 nd) secondary wall sign bearing " EZ Storage" logo to exceed 50 sq. ft. area limit and having area of 99.5 sq. ft.	X
	Site	
30-23	Amend plan(s) approved pursuant to BO #149-03, to the extent necessary.	X
30-23	Approval of site plan identifying all sign locations.	
30-23	Approval of elevation plans pertaining to placement of sign bands.	
	Special Permit	
30-24(d) BO#149-03	Amend prior Board Order #149-03.	X
30-24(d)	Approval of applicable exceptions and special permit(s).	

Reference materials

- Board Order #149-03, June 2, 2003. Site plan, waivers, and special permit for development.
- Board Order #149-03(2), June 2, 2003, Authorizing withdrawal (without prejudice) of sign component within item #149-03.

Plans reviewed:

- Plan titled "EZ Storage & The Shops at 300 Needham St. by Nolan Brothers, Inc." dated 10/7/05, Sheet C-6, Grade Plane Plan, prepared by ADD, Inc., 210 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139, stamped and signed by John A. Barrows, Registered Professional Engineer.
- Plan titled "EZ Storage & The Shops at 300 Needham St. by Nolan Brothers, Inc." dated 10/7/05, last revised 6/16/06, Sheet A-301, Building Elevations, prepared by ADD, Inc., 210 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139, bearing no stamp or signature of a registered professional.
- Plan set titled "Location #61, EZ Storage & The Shops at 300 Needham St., Newton, MA", dated 6/19/06, last revised 6/21/06, prepared by Icon Identity Solutions, 1418 Elmhurst Rd., Elk Grove Village, Ill 60007, bearing no stamp or signature of a registered professional, consisting of the following:
 - Page 1 of 3 — Indicating location of EZ Storage wall signs in plan view.
 - Page 2 of 4 — Containing sign detail and showing South Elevation
 - Page 3 of 4 — NHLP-Custom Non-Illuminated Horizontal Letters - Purple
 - Page 4 of 4 — Illustrating EZ Storage signs on South Elevation
- Plan set titled "300 Needham St. Signage" dated 5/22/06, prepared by ADD, Inc., 210 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02139, consisting of free standing sign detail sheets (color) as follows:
 - Proposed Sign at Needham Street — Front View
 - Proposed Sign at Christina Street — Front View
 - Section at Needham Street Sign
 - Proposed Sign at Needham Street/Christina Street — Side View
 - Proposed Sign at Needham Street/Christina Street — Plan View
- Color photographs illustrating existing streetscapes including the subject site, and signage along Needham St.



STORAGE

1/8

Office Hours:

1 5/8 Mon - Sat 8:00 am - 0:00 pm
 1 1/3 Sunday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm
 25*

Gate Hours:

1W 1 5/8 Daily 6:00 am - 0:00 pm

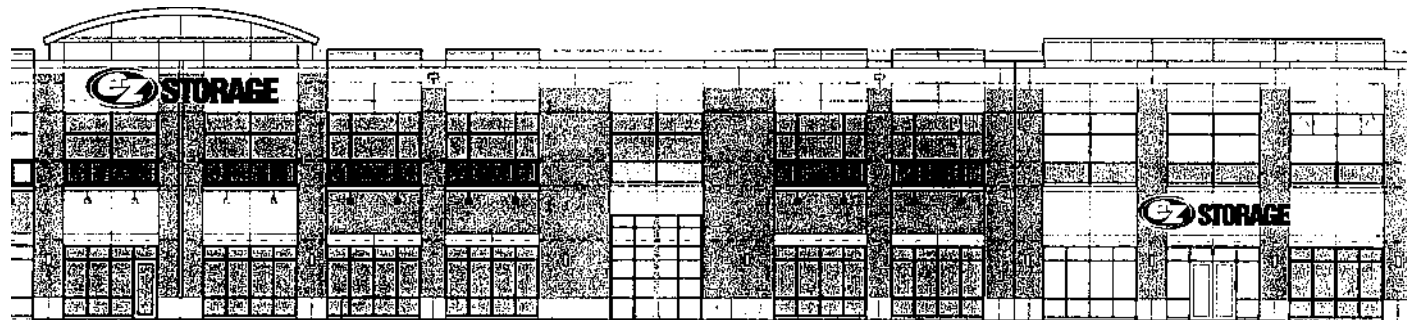
EO. 1'-3" Kt
 rat



FULL SOUTH ELEVATION

SIGN#1 & 2

SCALE: 1/32" = 1'-0"



PARTIAL SOUTH ELEVATION

SIGN #1 & 2

SCALE: 1/18" = 1'-0"

4 STORAGE

LOCATION: #61
 EZ Storage & The Shops at 300 Needham St.
 Newton, MA

FILE: 61 Newton MA
 DATE: 08/19/06
 DRAWN: bv

PAGE: 3 of 5
 SCALE: as noted
 DIRECTOR:

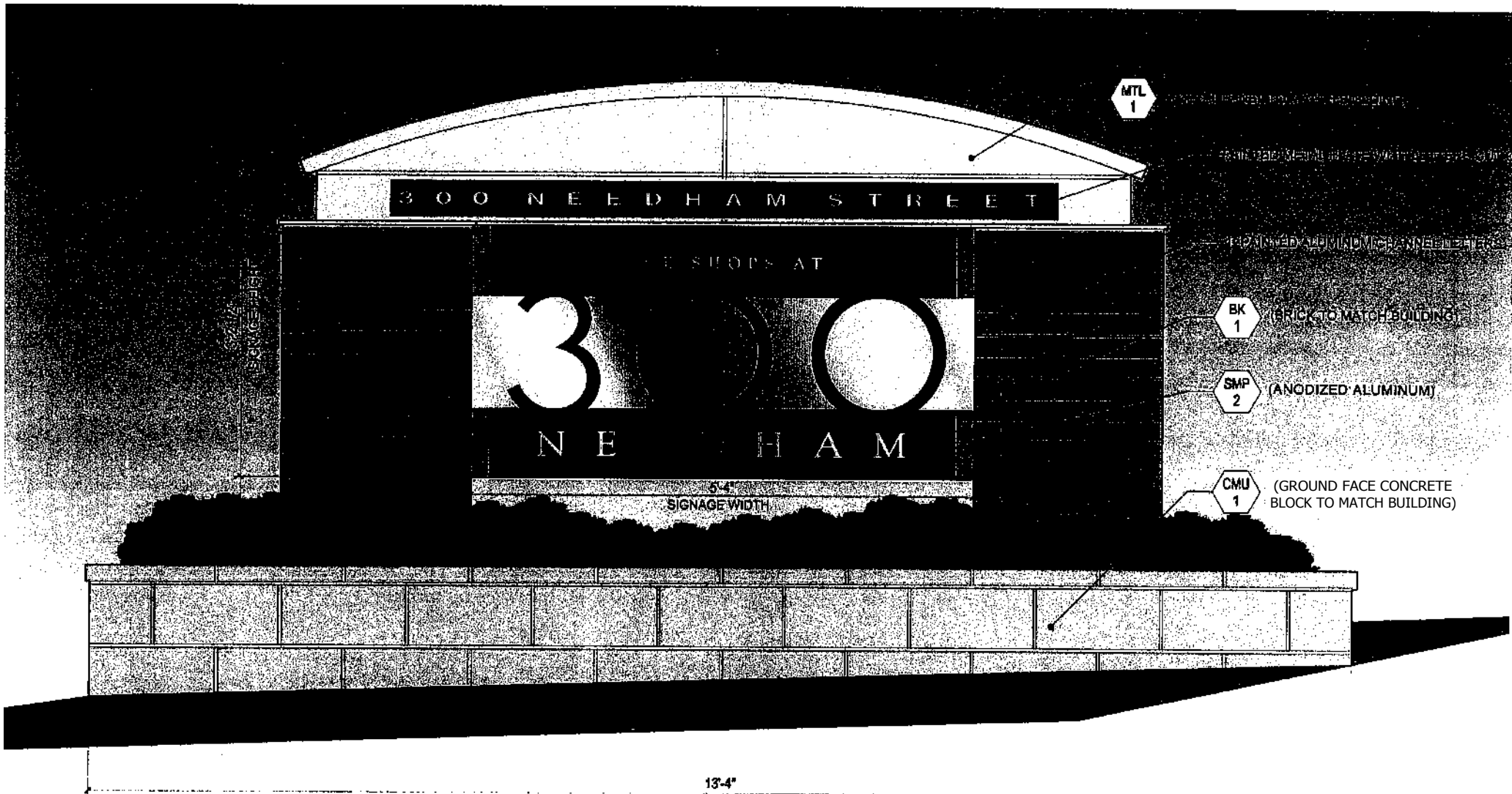
REVISED: 06/21/06
 08/07/06 08/28/08
 08/30/06 PMF

APPROVED BY / DATE

Pulled
 Mar.:

Icon . our own. 1418 El Wt., &...
 11176000+71"R

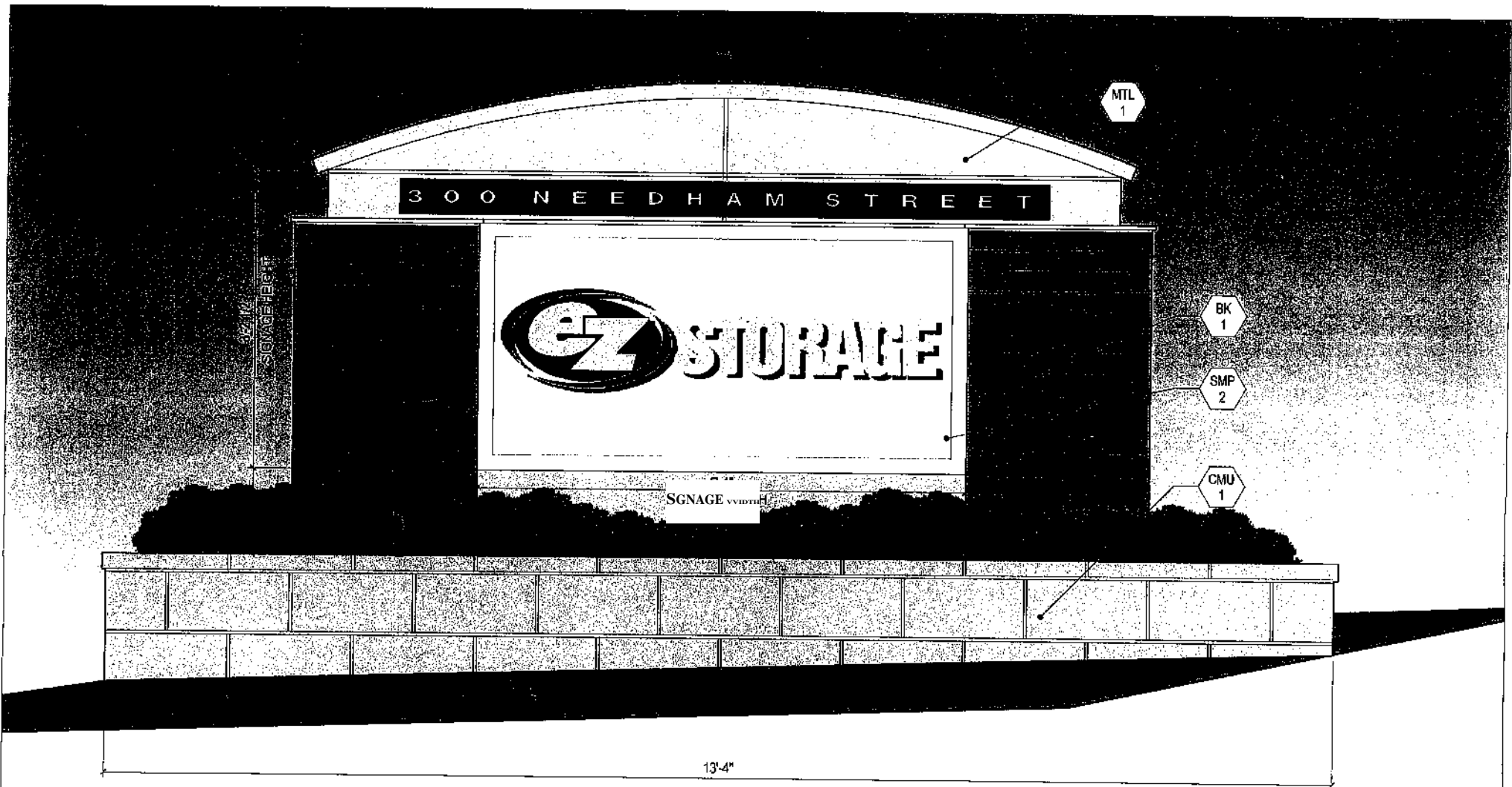
ATTACHMENT B



PROPOSED SIGN AT NEEDHAM STREET - FRONT VIEW

Signage Area: 18 SQ FT

Total Area: 39.6 SQ FT



PROPOSED SIGN AT CHRISTINA STREET - FRONT VIEW

Signage Area: 18 SQ FT

Total Area: 39.6 SQ FT

